DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 418 324 CE 076 287

AUTHOR	Larson, Elizabeth Hunt; Vandegrift, Judith A.
TITLE	Tenth Grade Students' Perceptions of Career Preparation and Work Experience in Arizona Schools. Arizona School to Work Briefing Paper #9.
INSTITUTION	Arizona State Univ., Tempe. Morrison Inst. for Public Policy.
SPONS AGENCY	Arizona State Dept. of Education, Phoenix. Div. of Adult Education.
PUB DATE	1997-07-00
NOTE	6p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Career Choice; *Career Education; *Career Planning; *Education Work Relationship; Ethnic Groups; Grade 10; High Schools; School Business Relationship; Sex Differences; State Programs; *Statewide Planning; Student Attitudes; Student Participation; *Work Experience Programs
IDENTIFIERS	*Arizona; School to Work Opportunities Act 1994

ABSTRACT

A survey assessed the extent to which Arizona 10th-grade students selected career majors, planned a course of study for high school and beyond, and received adult guidance related to careers through the school. In total, 2,131 tenth grade students participated in the survey administered in spring 1997 after one full year of school-to-work (STW) regional funding. Students represented 97 schools in all 15 counties across the 13 state-funded partnerships. Students were drawn from English or other general studies classes rather than classes with a vocational or STW emphasis. Statistical analyses examined whether responses differed by gender, ethnicity, and partnership. Findings indicated 39.8 percent of the students had a definite idea of what they wanted to do in the future; 54.5 percent had some idea of what they wanted to do. Students who identified a definite career choice indicated where their interests were in terms of one of Arizona's six "Career Pathways." Two pathways reflected prominent differences with respect to gender: more girls were interested in health services careers; more boys were interested in engineering. Over half participated in 7 of 14 activities assessed. Most often, students reported having learned about jobs or careers in class; least often, they reported having had a business mentor. A majority rated all activities as "somewhat helpful." For 9 of 10 students, family was most helpful in determining a career choice. Nearly one-third reported they had never received career guidance at school. (YLB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 418 324

Tenth Grade Students' Perceptions of Career Preparation and Work Experience in Arizona Schools
Arizona School to Work Briefing Paper #9

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

CE076287

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Tenth Grade Students' Perceptions of Career Preparation and Work Experience in Arizona Schools

Arizona School To Work Briefing Paper #9 *July 1997*

by
Judith A. Vandegrift and Elizabeth Hunt Larson
Morrison Institute for Public Policy

Arizona is in the process of creating a comprehensive *statewide system* of school-to-work opportunities for Arizona students. Supported by a School To Work (STW) grant from the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education, the state is implementing its STW initiative under the auspices of the Governor's Division of School To Work (GDSTW), a branch of the Governor's Office of Workforce Development Policy housed in the Arizona Department of Commerce.

In accordance with the STW Opportunities Act of 1994, Arizona's system is developing such that all students will have opportunities to explore careers in classrooms ***and*** in work-based situations. The state also fosters activities that help students bridge the gap between their school-based and work-based learning experiences. Thus, based on the Act, key components of Arizona's emerging STW system are: School-Based Learning, Work-Based Learning, and Connecting Activities for students.

Morrison Institute for Public Policy is coordinating a multi-faceted evaluation of the state's STW initiative on behalf of the GDSTW. One component of the evaluation involves surveying tenth grade students. Why tenth graders? The STW Opportunities Act of 1994 [Section 102. School-Based Learning Component] states:

"The school-based learning component of a STW Opportunities program *shall include* initial selection by interested students of a career major ***not later than the beginning of the eleventh grade.***"

Thus, the survey was designed to assess the extent to which Arizona tenth grade students, as a whole, have selected career majors, planned a course of study for high school and beyond, and received adult guidance related to careers through the school. As part of the evaluation of Arizona's emerging system, the intent was to look at the extent to which career preparation and work experiences truly are system-wide and impact students. In contrast, the purpose of the survey was ***not*** to evaluate whether "STW program participants" are receiving school-based learning components as prescribed by the STW Opportunities Act.

Administered in Spring 1997—after one full year of STW regional funding—the results presented in this briefing paper represent a baseline measure of tenth graders' responses upon which future comparisons can be made. Results are limited to state-level "top line" results only. Further analyses are forthcoming.

Survey Design and Methodology: An Overview

The survey was designed by a cadre of evaluators representing each of the 13 state-funded regional partnerships and Morrison Institute staff. The survey included seven questions designed primarily to determine the extent to which students have participated in 14 career preparation and work experiences appropriate for their grade level, perceive each to be helpful in identifying career interests, and have selected a career major. In addition, questions were designed to explore: the kinds of adults perceived to be influential in providing career guidance, high school course offerings related to careers and student participation in them, and student opinions regarding gender and jobs, and the race and ethnicity students.

In order to assure a statistically adequate statewide sample, a student quota was established within each partnership. Schools were then randomly selected in each partnership. Finally, individual classes of tenth graders were identified within each selected school.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

In summary, the sample is comprised of one or more classrooms of tenth grade students from randomly selected schools, stratified by partnership.

All students were drawn from English or other general studies classes rather than classes with a vocational or STW emphasis in order to avoid biasing survey results. Results, therefore, reflect the extent to which STW-like activities are system-wide.

In total, 2,131 tenth grade students participated in the survey. Students represent 97 schools in all 15 counties across the 13 state-funded partnerships. Of the respondents, 48 percent are male and 52 percent are female. For those students choosing to report race/ ethnicity, a majority (60 percent) are Anglo/white, 31 percent are Hispanic, five percent are American Indian, four percent are African American, and one percent are Asian American. At the state level, survey results represent four percent of the state's tenth grade population and are reliable at a 95% level of confidence (with margins of error not exceeding ± 2.2 percentage points).

All data were scanned and analyzed using SPSS software. State results were weighted by gender and enrollment for each partnership. Descriptive statistics for each question were derived for the total sample and by partnership. Statistical analyses were conducted to examine differences in responses to each question by gender, ethnicity, and partnership. Additional analyses are underway to investigate combinations of variables deemed of interest for program improvement.

Summary of Results

Career selection

With respect to the "bottom line" of the STW Opportunities Act, students were asked whether or not their had initially selected a career "major" or area of interest. Four out of every ten students (39.8%) indicate having a *definite* idea of what they want to do in the future, while another half (54.5%) indicate having some idea of what they want to do. Only six percent of the students surveyed said they have no idea of what they want to do in the future.

Of the students who identified a definite career choice, they were asked to indicate where their interests lay in terms of one of the state's six "Career Pathways" (defined by the Arizona Department of Education). Student choices were tabulated as a whole and by gender. Results of the latter analysis are shown in Table 1. As this table illustrates, two pathways reflect prominent differences with respect to gender: more girls are interested in Health Services Careers; more boys are interested in Engineering. Over ten percent of both boys and girls said they had made a career choice but were unable to classify it by a specific area of interest.

Table 1

Career Pathway (i.e., Area of Interest) Choices by Gender

Male	Career Choices by Pathway	Female
15.2%	Arts, Communications, and Humanities	17.4%
9.6%	Business Systems	12.2%
34.1%	Engineering/Industrial Systems	3.2%
11.9%	Social/Human Services	19.7%
7.0%	Health Services	**30.4%**
6.0%	Natural Resources	5.2%
16.2%	"Other"	11.9%

The analysis of Career Pathway selection by gender complements a question on the survey that specifically sought to determine student attitudes regarding jobs and gender. When asked which statement best reflected their opinion, 60 percent of all students agreed that "All jobs are equally good for both women and men." The converse was true when asked if "Some jobs are best for women and other jobs are best for men." However, when analyzed by gender, a significantly greater number of boys agreed with the second statement.

Activities influencing students' career selection

The survey examines both the activities and people that influence career selection. Fourteen career preparation and work experiences suited to students in upper grades were included. Students were asked whether they had ever participated in each activity.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Table 2

Arizona Tenth Grade Survey Results: Participation in Career Preparation and Work Experiences (N = 2, 131)

Activity (ranked by % "Yes" responses)	Yes		No	% Very helpful[a]
	>once	once		
Have you ever **learned about jobs or careers in class**?	47.9%	28.0%	24.1%	27.7%
Have you ever had **guest speakers** come to your class to talk about their jobs?	49.0%	26.3%	24.7%	26.9%
Have you ever **worked for pay** (but the job had nothing to do with school or your career interests)?	46.0%	27.1%	26.9%	25.2%
Have you ever used a **computer** at school to learn about or see people doing different jobs?	32.9%	27.0%	40.1%	37.6%
Have you ever taken a **field trip** to a workplace?	31.9%	24.9%	43.2%	30.1%
Have you ever taken a **Career Inventory, aptitude test or other test**?	22.2%	33.3%	44.5%	25.6%
Have you ever **volunteered** in the community?	37.0%	18.3%	44.7%	34.3%
Have you ever worked on a **class project** that taught about jobs?	22.0%	26.6%	51.4%	20.0%
Have you ever **job shadowed** (followed someone around their job)?	18.4%	18.2%	63.4%	50.5%
Have you ever gone to a **Career Fair**?	13.8%	22.4%	63.8%	27.4%
Have you ever worked (**with pay**) in an **internship**?	15.4%	11.5%	73.1%	48.6%
Have you ever worked (**without pay**) in an **internship**?	13.7%	10.8%	75.5%	41.8%
Have you ever kept a **career-related portfolio, file, or album**?	9.6%	11.4%	79.0%	33.0%
Have you ever had a **business mentor**?	6.9%	8.7%	84.4%	46.5%

[a] Ratings are based *only* on responses from tenth grade students who participated in the activity at least once.

and—if they had—to rate its helpfulness to them in terms of identifying a career interest. Responses are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2 shows that over half of all students—on at least one occasion—participated in seven of the 14 activities assessed. Most often, students report having learned about jobs or careers in class. Least often, students report having had a business mentor.

Overall, ***all*** activities were rated ***"somewhat helpful"*** by a majority of participants. However, Table 2 reveals that at least 40 percent of student participants rated four activities—job shadowing, paid and non-paid internships, and business mentorships—as "very helpful" to them in identifying a career interest. These activities are followed by career exploration using computers and volunteer work.

People influencing students' career selection

Students also were asked ***who*** has been helpful to them in identifying a career interest. Their responses, shown in Table 3, indicate that for nine of every ten students, family has been most helpful in determining a career choice. In contrast, fewer than half of the students reported being influenced by a community member or a business person. Given the number of people who influence career choices and are outside the school system, it may not be that

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

surprising that *nearly one-third of all students report that they have never received career guidance at school.*

Table 3
People rated as helpful in identifying career interests (in rank order)

% students	Role
91.1%	Your family
78.9%	A teacher
76.2%	Your friends
59.9%	A school counselor
55.7%	Someone in the community
46.8%	An employer or businessperson

High school curriculum

Finally, the survey sought to determine whether or not students were aware of and taking high school classes that support their career interests. Nearly half of those surveyed (48.4%) said they were "Not sure" whether their school offered courses related to their interest. By way of comparison, slightly over half (53%) report having participated or being currently enrolled in a course related to their career interest.

Discussion

This survey provides a baseline from which to measure the effect of efforts designed to help more students make meaningful career choices during their high school years. While the survey shows that many students already have made career choices (nearly 40 percent), and have participated in activities designed to help them do so, there remain several areas that can be targeted for growth.

For example, there is potential to increase the impact of student career preparation and work experiences by focusing attention on those activities that students perceive to be most helpful to them in identifying career interests. These include activities such as job shadowing, internships (both paid and unpaid) and business mentorships. In conjunction with expanding these types of experiences, a missed opportunity lies in the fact that 75 percent of students have worked for pay—but in jobs disconnected from their schooling or career interests. Student employment is an area that can be capitalized upon by better connecting these experiences with career counseling.

The survey also suggests the capacity for growth by expanding the involvement of business and family partners. Most students rely upon family members to help them define their career interests. Business partners, on the other hand, are least likely to be used—even though 75 percent of students have worked. Engaging family and businesses in STW opportunities appears essential for success.

Restructuring curriculum, as for example around "Career Pathways," might also increase students' ability to see the relevance of ***all*** high school courses to their futures. As it stands, student knowledge of curriculum related to developing career interests is limited. Finally, strategies to increase the perceived helpfulness of school personnel—teachers, counselors, and principals, and others—in providing career counseling should be explored. Strengthened career counseling might include equity issues, such that disparities between career choices based on gender and differing attitudes between young men and women toward careers dissipate over time.

Arizona's SCHOOLTOWORK SYSTEM

For additional information about Arizona's School To Work initiative, contact:

The Governor's Division of School To Work

(602) 280-8130

Gary Abraham, Director
Mimi Bull, Marketing & Technical Assistance Coordinator

A division of
The Arizona Department of Commerce
Governor's Office of Workforce Development Policy

C. Diane Bishop, Assistant Deputy Director

BEST COPY AVAILABLE